

Unit 12f: Vietnam

Objectives

At the end of this section, you will

Be aware of the following

- Religious persuasion of Montagnard highland people
- Domestic violence and discrimination experienced by women in Vietnam
- Impact of Tet holiday upon the Vietnam War (1968)
- Reverence given Ho Chi Minh by many Vietnamese
- Eclectic nature of Cao Dai thought and practice
- North Vietnamese doctrine of armed and political struggle during the Vietnam conflict
- Lessons learned from the Vietnam War of importance to military linguists

Identify

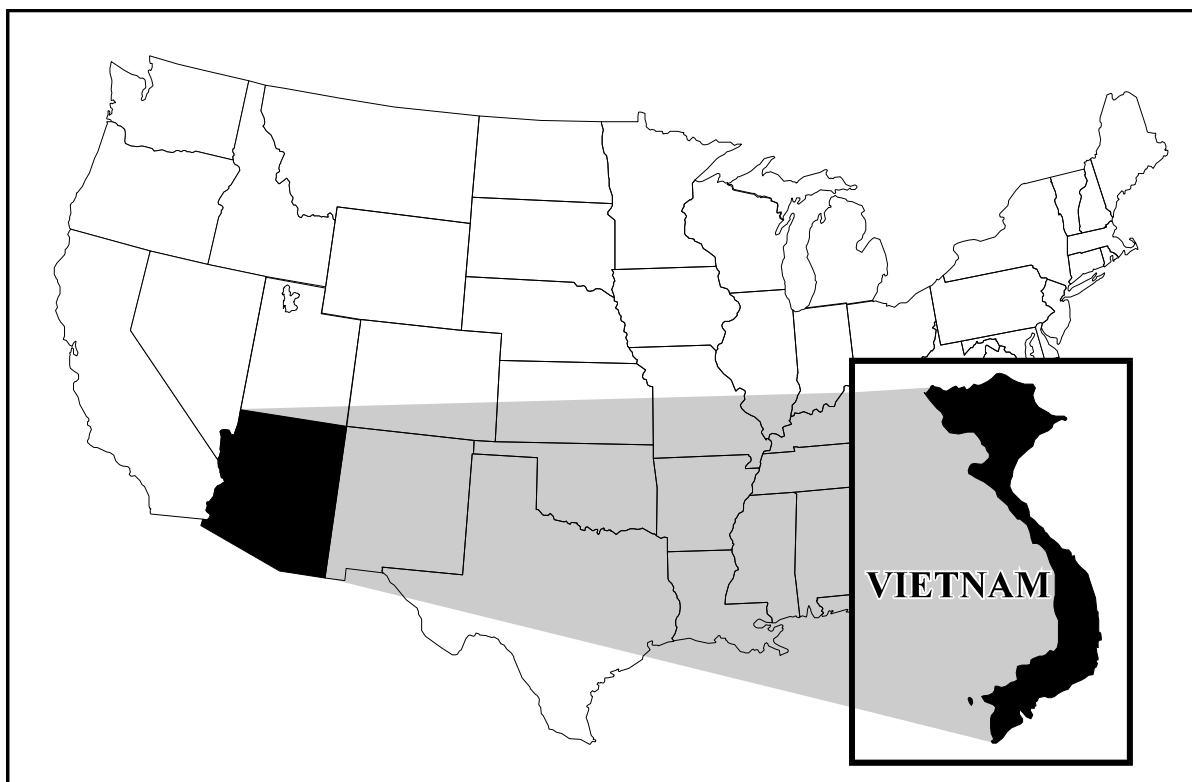
- Cao Dai, Hoa Hao
- Hoa (Han Chinese) minority
- Montagnards
- Hungry Ghost Festival
- Tet Nguyen Dan
- Vo Nguyen Giap, Ho Chi Minh
- Ngo Dinh Diem
- Viet Minh, Viet Cong, Peoples Army of Vietnam
- Dien Bien Phu
- Ho Chi Minh Trail
- Army of the Republic of Vietnam
- Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
- Ia Drang, My Lai, Vietnamization
- Henry Kissinger
- Pentagon Papers
- MIAs, boat people, Khmer Rouge
- Generals Westmoreland and Abrams

Realize

- Mahayana Buddhist persuasion of most ethnic Vietnamese
- Tolerance toward religion by Vietnamese government as long as official guidelines enforced
- Impact of folk religion on Vietnamese people
- Importance of Spratley Islands to Southeast Asian countries
- Current perspectives of Vietnamese people to the U.S.
- Government restrictions on church/religious activity in Vietnam
- Importance of culture in negotiating styles
- Necessity of respect for holidays, enemy leadership, and personage of individual enemy in combat operations/power projection strategies

Vietnam

(vee-eh-NAHM)



<u>Population</u>	74,393,324
% under 15 years	36%
<u>Commo</u>	
TV	1:28
Radio	1:9
Phone	1:563
Newspaper	9:1,000
<u>Health</u>	
Life Expectancy	Male 64/Female 68
Hospitals	1:329
Doctors	1:2,617
IMR	45:1,000
<u>Income</u>	\$1,000.00 per cap
<u>Literacy Rate</u>	88%

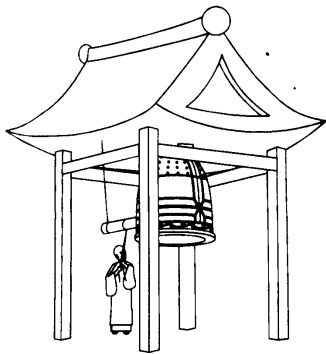
1. Religious Groups

a. Buddhist

"Historically, most Vietnamese have identified themselves with Buddhism..."

The Chinese version, Mahayana Buddhism, became the faith of most Vietnamese, whereas the Indian version, Theravada (or Hinayana) Buddhism, was confined mostly to the southern delta region.

Few Vietnamese outside the clergy, however, are acquainted with Buddhism's elaborate cosmology. What appealed to them at the time it was introduced was Mahayana ritual and imagery.



Mahayana ceremony easily conformed to indigenous Vietnamese beliefs, which combined folklore with Confucian and Taoist teachings, and Mahayana's "enlightened ones" were often venerated alongside various [indigenous] spirits.

The government-controlled Vietnam Buddhist Church was established in November 1981, and it emerged as the only officially sanctioned organization authorized to represent all Buddhist groups both at home and abroad.

The communist government's attitude toward Buddhism and other faiths being practiced remained one of tolerance as long as the clergy and faithful adhered strictly to official guidelines.

These guidelines inhibited the growth of religious institutions, however, by restricting the number of institutions approved to train clergy and by preempting the time of potential candidates among the youth whose daily routine might require study, work, and participation in the

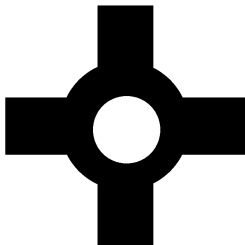
activities of communist youth organizations. In an apparent effort to train a new generation of monks and nuns, the Vietnam Buddhist Church reportedly set up one Buddhist academy in Hanoi in November 1981 and another in Ho Chi Minh City in December 1984. These academies, however, served as an arm of the state." (Unless stated otherwise, all quotations are from the Library of Congress Country Studies/Area Handbooks--Vietnam.)

b. Catholic

"Despite the Roman Catholic Church's rejection of ancestor worship, a cornerstone of the Confucian cultural tradition, Roman Catholicism established a solid position in Vietnamese society under French rule.

The French encouraged its propagation to balance Buddhism and to serve as a vehicle for the further dissemination of Western culture.

After the mid-1950s, Catholicism declined in the North, where the communists regarded it as a reactionary force opposed to national liberation and social progress.



In the South, by contrast, Catholicism expanded under the presidency of Ngo Dinh Diem [NGOH DEEN DYEM], who promoted it as an important bulwark against North Vietnam. Under Diem, himself a devout Catholic, Roman Catholics enjoyed an advantage over non-Catholics in commerce, the professions, education, and the government.

This caused growing Buddhist discontent that contributed to the eventual collapse of the Diem regime and the ultimate rise to power of the military. Roman Catholics in reunified Vietnam numbered about 3.0 million in 1984, of whom nearly 1 million resided in the North and the remainder in the South."

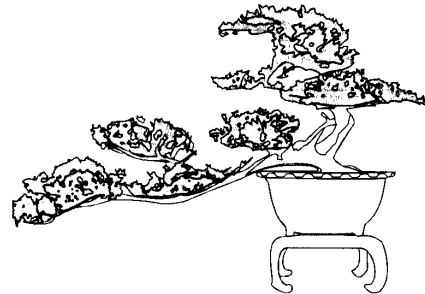
c. Cao Dai and Hoa Hao

"Two religious movements that enjoyed considerable followings before 1975 were the Cao Dai (kow-DI) and the Hoa Hao [WHA=HOW]. Both were founded in this century in the Mekong [MAY-KONG] River Delta.

The Cao Dai, the older of the two and a self-styled reformed Buddhist sect, flourished in the rural areas of the southern delta region. It was founded and initially propagated by Ngo Van Chieu, a minor official who, in 1919, claimed to have had a series of revelations. The faith grew under the leadership of Le Van Trung, its first 'pope' or Supreme Chief, chosen in 1925. An amalgam of different beliefs derived from Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, and Western nineteenth-century romanticism, it claimed 1 million to 2 million adherents.

The Hoa Hao [WHA HOW], with more than 1 million followers, identified itself as a reformed Theravada Buddhist sect, but, unlike the Cao Dai, it preserved a distinctive Buddhist coloration.

Based mostly in the southernmost areas of the delta, it stressed individual prayer, simplicity, and social justice over icon veneration or elaborate ceremonies.



Before 1975 both faiths sought, with some success, to remain neutral in the war between Hanoi and Saigon. After 1975, however, like Buddhists and Roman Catholics, they were under heavy pressure from the communist regime to join its ranks."

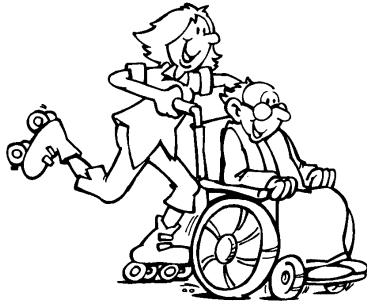
d. Protestants

"Protestants, numbered between 100,000 and 200,000 in the early 1980s, and were found mostly among the Montagnard communities inhabiting the South's central highlands.

Because of their alleged close association with American missionaries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Protestants were reported to have suffered more than Catholics after 1975."

e. Folk religion

"In addition to organized religions, there existed a melange of beliefs without institutional structure that nevertheless had an enduring impact on Vietnamese life well into the 1980s.



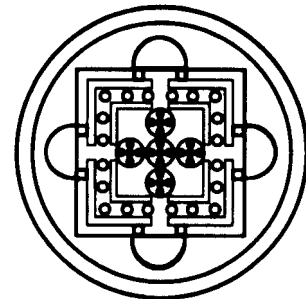
These beliefs derived partly from Confucianism, stressed the virtues of filial piety, loyalty, family solidarity, and ancestor veneration--all central to the family system of the old society.

Taoism, another important system of belief introduced from China, emphasized the importance of an individual's relationship to nature and to the universe. Beliefs rooted in Taoism were condemned by the regime as superstitious.

Despite official disapproval of superstitious practices, most Vietnamese, regardless of their professed religion, level of education, or ideology, were influenced at one time or another by such practices as astrology, [divination by means of patterns in thrown rocks, bones or earth] and sorcery.

Diviners and other specialists in the occult remained in popular demand because they were believed to be able to diagnose supernatural causes of illness, establish lucky dates for personal undertakings, or predict the future. Moreover, many Vietnamese believed that individual destiny was guided by astrological phenomena.

By consulting one's horoscope, one could make the most of auspicious times and avoid disaster. It was not unusual, for example, for a couple to consult an astrologer before marrying. He would determine if the betrothed were suitably matched and even fix the date of the ceremony.



The belief in good and evil spirits, or [indigenous belief], antedated all organized faiths in Vietnam and permeated the society, especially in the rural areas and in the highlands. These beliefs held that all phenomena and forces in the universe were controlled by spirits and that the souls of the dead were instrumental in determining an individual's fate.

If propitiated, they provided the living with protection; if ignored, they induced misfortune. Although officially condemned as 'superstitious practices,' these beliefs continued to proliferate in the rural and in the highland areas as well as in the cities in the 1980s."



2. Ethnic/Racial Groups

a. Vietnamese (85-90%)

"The ethnic Vietnamese are concentrated largely in the alluvial deltas and in the coastal plains, having little in common with the minority peoples of the highlands, whom they historically have regarded as hostile and barbaric. A homogenous social group, the Vietnamese exert influence on national life through their control of political and economic affairs and their role as purveyors of the dominant culture."

b. Minorities

(1) Hoa (WHA) *"The 1979 census listed fifty-three minorities accounting for 12.7 percent (6.6 million persons) of the national population. This figure included the Hoa (Han Chinese), the single largest bloc--representing approximately 1.5 percent of the total population, or about 935,000 people--in the lowland urban centers of both the North and the South."*



(2) Montagnards (mon-tahn-YAHRD)

"Minorities that live in the mountainous regions are known by their generic name, Montagnards. The Vietnamese also disparagingly call them 'moi,' meaning savage. The government attributes the backwardness of the Montagnards to the overwhelming influence of their history as exploited and oppressed peoples. They are darker skinned than their lowland neighbors."

(Among these minorities, the Tay, Thai, Khmer, Muong, Nung, Hmong, and Zao each have between 346,000 to 901,000 members.)

"The non-Chinese minority peoples, however, are for the most part highlanders who live in relative independence and follow their own traditional customs and culture. They are classified as either sedentary or nomadic. The sedentary groups, the more numerous of the two kinds, are engaged mainly in the cultivation of wet rice and industrial crops; the nomadic groups, in slash-and-burn farming where forested land is cleared for a brief period of cultivation and then abandoned.

Religious practices among highland minorities tend to be rooted in [indigenous] beliefs. Most worship a pantheon of spirits, but a large number are Catholics or Protestants.

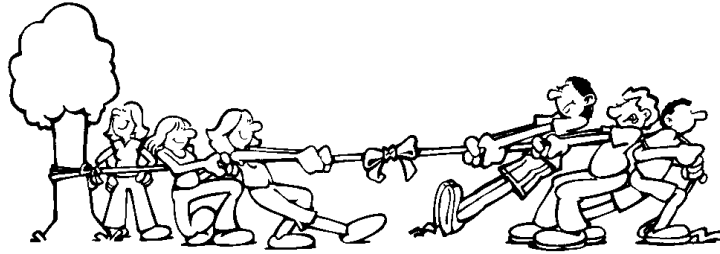
In contrast to the Mahayana Buddhist beliefs of the majority of Vietnamese, the Khmer practice Theravada (or Hinayana) Buddhism, and the Cham subscribe to both Islam and Hindu beliefs.

Before the arrival of the French in the nineteenth century, the highland minorities lived in isolation from the lowland population. Upon the consolidation of French rule, however, contacts between the two groups increased.

The French, interested in the uplands for plantation agriculture, permitted the highlanders their linguistic and cultural autonomy, and administered their areas separately from the rest of Vietnam. Conferring this special status gave the French a free hand in cultivating the largely unexploited highlands, where their administrators and Christian missionaries also set up schools, hospitals, and leprosariums."



3. Gender Issues



a. Domestic violence *"Although the law addresses the issue of domestic violence, there is credible evidence that the problem is on the rise, and that the laws are not enforced adequately. International NGO workers and many women have stated that domestic violence against women is common.*



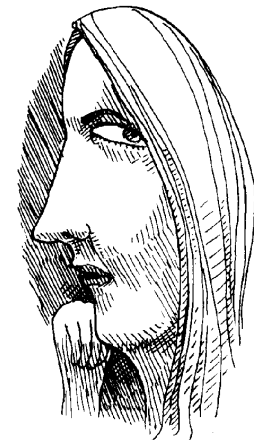
Most divorces are due to domestic violence, although many women remain in abusive marriages rather than confront the stigma of divorce. Domestic abuse appears to be more prevalent in rural areas." (Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from the U.S. Department of State Report on Human Rights for 1996--Vietnam.)

b. Prostitution *"The Government, international NGO's, and the press reported a marked increase in recent years in the trafficking of women both domestically and abroad for purposes of prostitution."*

Organized rings reportedly lure poor, often rural, women with promises of jobs or marriage and force them to work as prostitutes. Some are kidnapped and sold as wives to men in other countries. The press and anecdotal sources indicate that the problem of sex tourism is growing, with increasing prostitution of children. The Government is working with NGO's to supplement law enforcement measures in these areas."

c. Discrimination *"While there is no legal discrimination, women face deeply ingrained social discrimination."*

Despite extensive provisions in the Constitution, in legislation, and in regulations that mandate equal treatment, and although some women occupy high government posts, in general few women are able to compete effectively for higher status positions. The Government has not enforced the constitutional provision that women and men must receive equal pay for equal work."



4. Conflicts

International disputes

"Maritime boundary with Cambodia not defined; involved in a complex dispute over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea with China, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, and possibly Brunei; unresolved maritime boundary with Thailand; maritime boundary dispute with China in the Gulf of Tonkin; Paracel Islands in the South China Sea occupied by China but claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan; offshore islands and sections of boundary with Cambodia are in dispute." (1996 CIA World Factbook)

5. Holidays/Observances (The following material, adapted from Holidays, Festivals and Celebrations of the World Dictionary, compiled by Sue Thompson and Barbara Carlson, [Detroit: Omnigraphics, 1994], is instructive).

a. Doan Ngu (dwan new, June)

- Celebrates Summer Solstice
- Offerings made to spirits and ghosts
- Burnings of human figures provide souls to staff the spiritual army

b. Hungry Ghost Festival (Aug-Sep)

- Remembrance of souls of dead through grave visitation
- Known as Yue Lan, Vu Lan Day, Day of the Dead, Trung Nguyen (chung new-when)

- Second most important festival after Tet

- Incense offered at grave sites
- Home altars: one prepared for Buddha with incense, fruit and rice; one for ancestors with rice soup, fruit, and meat

c. Mid-Autumn Festival (full moon nearest 15 Sep)

- Called Trung (chung) Thursday, a children's festival
- Parade with candle-lit paper lanterns, some like animals, others white like a full moon
- Dancers parade with dragons of paper and cloth

d. Tet (usually late Jan or early Feb)

- Vietnamese New Year, an abbreviation for Tet Nguyen Dan, "first day"
- Start of new year with family reunions, respect given departed ancestors, payment of debts





"At midnight on the New Year the return of the Spirit of the Hearth is welcomed with firecrackers, gongs, and drums. The festival then continues for a week..." (Holidays, Festivals and Celebrations of the World Dictionary, ed. Sue Thompson, p. 335).

e. Thanh-Minh (tang ming)

- Similar to U.S. Memorial Day, Thanh-Minh day honors the dead
- Flowers, food, incense and other offerings brought by family members to the graves of departed relatives

f. Other Holidays



(1) International New Year's Day (1 Jan)

(2) Day to remember the defeat of the South Vietnamese Government (30 April)

(3) Labor Day (1 May)

(4) National Day (2 Sep)

(5) Anniversary of Ho Chi Minh's Death (3 Sep)

6. Customs

a. Gestures

- **Head** Avoid touching young children upon the head
- **Pointing** Using the index finger to point may be considered rude. Waving the palm down with four fingers is an alternative.
- **Passing** Both hands are used to pass materials

b. The Vietnam Conflict

The following perspective, adapted from Culturgrams, The Nations Around Us, Vol. II, (Garrett Park, MD: Garrett Park Press, 1995), p. 282, offers insight.



The Vietnamese tend to focus on the future. In part, American involvement in the Vietnam War is past history. Other wars were fought before and after. Many Vietnamese have a genuine interest in American ways and harbor little ill-will over the conflict.

c. Freedom of religion

"Both the Constitution and government decrees provide for freedom of worship, but the Government continues to restrict severely religious activities it defined as at variance with state laws and policies."



The Government generally allows people to practice the religion of their choice, and participation in religious activities throughout the country continues to increase. However, the Government also maintains policies designed to control religious hierarchies and organized religious activities, in part because it fears that organized religion may undermine the Party's authority and influence.

Religious organizations must obtain government permission to hold training seminars, conventions, and celebrations outside the regular religious calendar, to build or remodel places of worship, to engage in charitable activities or operate religious schools, and to ordain, promote, or transfer clergy. All religious groups continue to face difficulty in obtaining teaching materials, expanding training facilities in response to the increasing demand for clergy, and publishing religious materials.

The Government requires all Buddhist monks to work under the party-controlled Buddhist umbrella organization. The Government has sought to control the Catholic Church hierarchy, in part by requiring that all clergy belong to the government-controlled Catholic Patriotic Association. It has also insisted on approving Vatican appointments. The Government prohibits the Catholic Church from educational and charitable activities because it will not accept government supervision and authority, as Buddhist congregations do.



The Government allowed bishops and priests to travel freely within their dioceses, but continues to restrict their travel outside these areas. The Government has limited the Church to operating 6 major seminaries throughout the country, totaling approximately 700 students. The Government

allows the Church to recruit new students only every 2 years. All students must be approved by the Government, both upon entering the seminary and prior to ordination as priests. The number of graduating students was insufficient to support the growing Catholic population, estimated at 5 million.

The Christian Missionary Alliance of Vietnam, the only government-approved Protestant organization in the country, enjoys slightly greater freedom to operate. Church attendance grows despite continued government restrictions on proselytizing activities. Nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) report continued arrests and government harassment of some ethnic Hmong Protestants for proselytizing in northern Vietnamese villages.

The Government restricts exit permits for Muslims seeking to make the hajj."

d. Foreign area officer perspectives

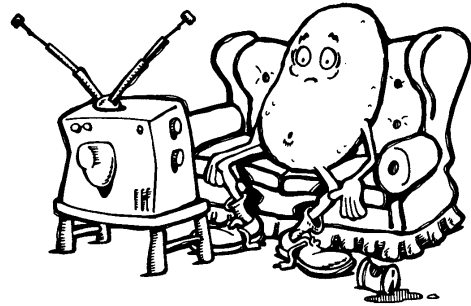


The following narrative, adapted for a trip report to Vietnam by FAO CPT Ralph A. Skeba, is instructive.

(1) Meeting with the Malaysian embassy staff. "Mr. Mohamad had spent the last four years representing his country in Vietnam and provided the following insights:

- *He told me that most businesses wanted to locate in the South. Because of this, the North was not developing as rapidly as the South. He stated that the government was giving foreign companies a difficult time unless they located their Headquarters in Hanoi, and put branch offices in Ho Chi Minh City. He stated that getting a business license in Vietnam was just the start of many headaches in Vietnam, and once the license was given, there was no guarantee of renewal, or even retention of this license.*

- *Mr. Mohamad stated that the Vietnamese government wanted industry, technology and foreign investment all at once, but had 'no idea' on how to plan for this.*
- *He stated that during his tenure, he saw a one hundred percent gain in the number of motorbikes on the road. He also observed the 'television boom', to the extent that most Vietnamese save for a television before any other big ticket item.*
- *Mr. Mohamad told me that many of the people that he spoke to in the south refer to the North as their "colonial brothers."*



(2) Other observations

- *The Vietnamese welcome visitors to their country. It would appear that they believe that tourism is important for foreign investment. Although awkward in many aspects of dealing with foreigners, they are careful to treat foreigners with respect. It would appear that either they understand the basic concept of attracting tourists, or the government harshly deals with those who jeopardize tourist interest in the country.*
- *Foreign investments seemed to be pouring into the country. Many foreign companies are already represented in Vietnam.*
- *It would appear that the Vietnamese are a determined race. They are energetic and ingenious in their endeavors. It appears that diligence is stressed in all aspects of their society, and that societal norms keep the people in line.*
- *Vietnam appeared to be 'drunk' with reverence for Ho Chi Minh. His pictures and statues are everywhere, and most of the public speakers mentioned his name at least once in their speeches. Reverence for Ho Chi Minh is mandatory by law, and it appeared to me that many of the people are preoccupied with rebuilding their country, and pay reverence only when they believe that they must.*

(3) Conclusions

- *It would appear that Vietnam has a bright future. The war years have, in effect, created a people that are determined to not only survive, but achieve. The foreign policies that are in place today reflect a growing country.*
- *Although they are seemingly infantile at this stage, Vietnam appears to be going in the direction of developing as an economically and socially powerful country. This, however, will take time.*
- *Vietnam seems to be a Communist country only by name. The economic reforms have made Vietnam a rather free market economy - something that we can safely say Marx never would have claimed as communist in his theories. The government claims to be Communist in its social ideals only."*



7. Cultural Literacy Concepts/Terms The following terms, adapted from The Dictionary of Global Culture, (edited by Kwame Appiah and Henry Gates, Jr., NY: Alfred Knopf, 1997), apply to Vietnam. See this valuable dictionary for further information.

a. Bao Dai (bow di, 1913-1997)

- Born Nguyen Vinh Thuy, ruled Vietnam as the last emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty from 1926-45
- In a final attempt to control the Viet Minh (Ho Chi Minh's political party), Bao Dai allowed the French to reclaim hold on Vietnam
- In 1945, was forced to abdicate and fled to Paris
- Returned four years later
- When Viet Minh permanently expelled the French in 1954, Bao Dai was exiled to France

b. Cao Dai (kow-DI)

- Vietnamese religious sect founded in the early twentieth century by Ngo Van Chieu

- Fully named Dai Dao Tam Ky Pho Do, it incorporates Far East philosophies with western Christianity and ancient traditions
- Combination strongly appealed to a people exposed to broad beliefs and colonial influences

- Presently roughly 1.5 million South Vietnamese consider themselves Cao Dai

c. Giap, Vo Nguyen (ZAP vo new-win, 1911-)

- Organized the Viet Minh as Commander-in-Chief
- Master of guerrilla warfare who fought the Japanese during WWII, ended French colonization in Vietnam, and defeated United States forces
- Served as deputy prime minister and minister of defense until his retirement in 1982



d. Ho Chi Minh (HOH CHEE MIHN, 1969)

- "Father of his country," founding the Communist party in Vietnam after co-founding the same in France twenty years prior
- Born Nguyen Sinh Cung, Minh left Vietnam in 1911 and traveled the world for thirty years, growing alongside the international Communist movement
- Returned to Vietnam in 1941 and formed the Viet Minh to oust the Japanese
- Under treaty of the Geneva Accords, Vietnam was split into a Communist north and a southern republic
- In 1975, after Communist victory, Saigon was renamed Ho Chi Minh City in his honor

e. Ngo Dinh Diem (NOH DEEN DYEM, 1901-1963)

- In 1954, Diem staged an election and became the first president of South Vietnam
- Anticommunist, anti-French, and against unification with North Vietnam
- Formed a loose alliance with the United States to contain the Communist North
- Severely abused power by placing family members in high ranking positions, and actively promoting Catholicism
- A coup assassinated Diem and his brother in 1963

f. Viet Minh (vee-eht MIHN)



- Common name given to the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnamese Independence League) founded by the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) in 1941 under Ho Chi Minh
- Determined to free Vietnam of all foreigners and reunite the split nation
- Guerrilla tactics allowed for widespread recruitment of untrained peasants into the fighting force
- In 1954, the Viet Minh defeated the French at Diem Bien Phu leading to recognition of Ho Chi Minh's government in Hanoi



8. Resources for Further Study

a. Cross-cultural resources

Ellis, Claire. Culture Shock! Vietnam. (ISBN 1-55868-242-2), Portland, Oregon: Graphic Arts Center Publishing, 1995.

Beg, borrow, or purchase books in this series. Highly recommended by the Overseas Briefing Center, U.S. Department of State.

Jamieson, Neil. Understanding Vietnam. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Scholarly yet readable treatment of the Vietnam people, culture, history and religion. In "The Traditional Vietnamese View of the World," the author writes, "In all things, when a proper balance was maintained between yin and yang, harmony was maintained and beneficent outcomes were assured...all foods were believed to have an 'essential nature,' to be hot, warm, cool, or cold. 'Hot' and 'warm' foods were yang, 'cool' and 'cold' food were yin. Diet could thus disrupt or restore harmony between yin and yang." (p. 11)

Robinson, Daniel, and Robert Storey. Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit--Vietnam. Berkeley, Calif: Lonely Planet, 1993.

The best series, by far, of readily accessible travel guides. Don't leave for Vietnam without this text.

West, Helen. Insight Guides--Vietnam. Singapore: APA Publications, 1991.

Part of the aesthetically pleasing and helpful Insight series. Beautiful photographs, in National Geographic manner, make this a helpful text.

**b. Biography, novels,
literature, poetry**



Baao Ninh. The Sorrow of War: A Novel of North Vietnam. New York: Pantheon Books, c1993.

► Aiso Library: Vietnamese VIE 895.92-/233 B221 1993

Balaban, John, ed. Vietnamese Folk Poetry. Greensboro, NC: Unicorn Press, 1980.

► Aiso Library: Vietnamese VIE 895.921 C121

A bilingual anthology with over 70 poems and an introduction to the tradition of Vietnamese poetry.

Bouscaren, Anthony Trawick. The Last of the Mandarins: Dien of Vietnam. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1965.

► Bosun Library: General CT14.G5 B7

Biography of Vietnam's last president, his assassination, and the aftermath.

Duong, Thu Huong. Novel Without a Name. New York: W. Morrow, c1995.

► Aiso Library: Vietnamese VIE 895.92-/-233 D928 1995

Tragic tale of the Vietnam War written by a woman who fought with the North Vietnamese and was later arrested and expelled from the Communist Party for dissident views. Banned in Vietnam, the novel follows a soldier in the Viet Cong, his struggles to remain civilized and true to Buddhism (a peaceful philosophy). The novel utilizes flashbacks to provide history for the main characters.

Grey, Anthony. Saigon. Boston: Little, Brown, 1982.

▮ Chamberlin Library: FICTION GREY

Novel spans four generations and fifty years of an American in Saigon.

Hayslip, Le Ly. Child of War, Woman of Peace. New York: Doubleday, 1993.

▮ Chamberlin Library: 959.704 HAYS, 1993

Huynh, Sanh Thong. The Heritage of Vietnamese Poetry. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979.

▮ Chamberlin Library: 895.9221 HERI

Huynh, Sanh Thong. The Tale of Kieu. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1983.

▮ Aiso Library: Vietnamese VIE 895.922 N576t

Since its publication in the early nineteenth century, this long narrative poem has stood unchallenged as the supreme masterpiece of Vietnamese literature. The tale of a young woman forced by circumstance to become a prostitute is often interpreted as a metaphor for the betrayal of principle under duress. A bilingual edition which includes a chapter for historical background.

Lacouture, Jean. Ho Chi Minh: A Political Biography. Random House, [1968].

▮ Bosun Library: General DS557.A6 L2

Nguyen, Trieu Dan. A Vietnamese Family Chronicle: 12 Generations on the Banks of the Hat River. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1991.

▮ Aiso Library: Vietnamese VIE 929.2-/-09597 N576 1991

A well-written historical and biographical work. The author translated a compilation of his family history saved through time and added historical and autobiographical facts. Easy to read and well documented. The family history opens as follows: "A tree has countless branches and a dense canopy of leaves, because its roots grow deep into the soil. The water flows out in a multitude of streams and currents, for it has its source a long way back in the mountains. He who inherits the merit acquired by his ancestors for many generations, has children and grand-children in abundance."

Truong, Nhu Tang. A Vietcong Memoir. New York: Vintage Books, 1986, c1985.

► Bosun Library: General CT20.R92 T78 1986

The autobiography of the highest ranking official to defect from Vietnam. Truong fought the United States as one of their most determined adversaries only to find disillusionment and despair at the end of the war.

Walker, Keith. A Piece of My Heart: The Stories of 26 American Women who Served in Vietnam. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986.

► Bosun Library: General CT32.P53 1986

The stories of nurses, volunteers, and entertainers. Excellent narratives which includes statistics on women who served in Vietnam.

Xuan-Viet. The Nine Dragons Hymn; Ten Poems from Vietnam with Original Texts in Vietnamese. Saigon: Nguoi Viet, 1969.

► Aiso Library: Vietnamese VIE 895.921 N575 1969

c. Military topics



(1) Vietnam war novels

Bunch, Chris. A Reckoning for Kings: A Novel of the Tet Offensive. New York: Atheneum, 1987.

► Chamberlin Library: FICTION BUNCH

Carroll, Gerry. Ghostrider One. New York: Pocket Books, 1993.

► Chamberlin Library: FICTION CARROLL

Halberstam, David. One Very Hot Day; A Novel. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, c1967.

► Chamberlin Library: FICTION HALBER

Moore, Robin. The Green Berets. New York: Crown Publishers [1965].

► Aiso Library: Vietnamese VIE 813.5 M823

Scott, Leonard B. Charlie Mike. New York: Ballantine Books, 1988.

▮ Chamberlin Library: FICTION SCOTT

Webb, James. Fields of Fire: A Novel. New York: Bantam Books, 1985, c1978.

▮ Chamberlin Library: FICTION WEBB

(2) General interest

Downs, Frederick. No Longer Enemies, Not Yet Friends. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991.

Account of a former highly decorated combat leader who returns to Vietnam on humanitarian aid missions.

"...his five visits became an extraordinary personal odyssey from hatred and suspicion to a deeper understanding of all human suffering."

Frey, Bill. Letters from 'Nam. New York: Warner Books, 1992.

Letters from an infantryman to family members in the states. Bill Frey was killed in Vietnam during the last weeks of his thirteen month tour.

Hackworth, David. About Face. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.

Few books give greater insight into soldierly life during the Vietnam era; few authors generate more controversy that Col (Ret) Hackworth.

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Unit 12f: Country Studies--Vietnam

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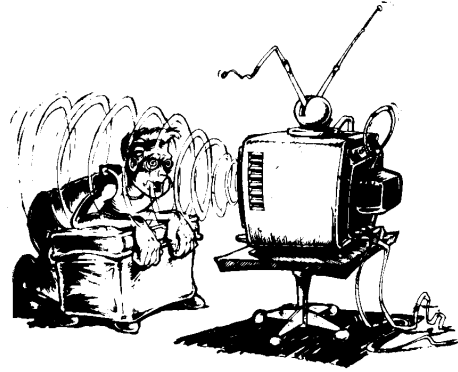
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"Follow Through"

APPENDIX: CHRONOLOGY--VIETNAM, 1945-1975



In many ways, the Vietnam Conflict remains with us. Few Americans who grew to maturity during 1960 - 1975 stand unaffected. The following outline, adapted from "Chronology: Vietnam, 1945-1975," (The Evolution of Modern War, [Ft. Leavenworth, KS: CGSC Syllabus C620, DEC 1992, p. 357]), acquaints students with major dates and events of the era.

I. First Indochina War (France in Vietnam, 1945-1956)

- 1945** Communist-led Viet Minh (VEE-et MIHN) Independence League seizes power under Ho Chi Minh (HOH CHEE MIHN) and establishes "Democratic Republic of Vietnam."
- 1946** France recognizes Democratic Republic of Vietnam as "free state" within Indochinese Federation and French Union. Viet Minh attack French troops, beginning eight-year Indochina War.
- 1950** United States announces military and economic aid to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.
- 1954** French stronghold at Dien Bien Phu (DYEN byen FOO) falls.



Dien Bien Phu "The newly appointed commander of French forces in Vietnam, General Henri Navarre, decided soon after his arrival in Vietnam that it was essential to halt a Viet Minh offensive underway in neighboring Laos. To do so, Navarre believed it was necessary for the French to capture and hold the town of Dien Bien Phu, sixteen kilometers from the Laotian border."

"Viet Minh strategists, led by Giap, concluded that a successful attack on a French fortified camp, timed to coincide with the peace talks, would give Hanoi the necessary leverage for a successful conclusion of the negotiations.

Accordingly, the siege of Dien Bien Phu began on March 13, by which time the Viet Minh had concentrated nearly 50,000 regular troops, 55,000 support troops, and almost 100,000 transport workers in the area. Chinese aid...reached 1,500 tons per month by early 1954.

The French garrison of 15,000, which depended on supply by air, was cut off by March 27, when the Viet Minh artillery succeeded in making the airfield unusable. An elaborate system of tunnels dug in the mountainsides enabled the Viet Minh to protect its artillery pieces by continually moving them to prevent discovery. Several hundred kilometers of trenches permitted the attackers to move progressively closer to the French encampment. In the final battle, human wave assaults were used to take the perimeter defenses, which yielded defensive guns that were then turned on the main encampment. The French garrison surrendered on May 7, ending the siege that had cost the lives of about 25,000 Vietnamese and more than 1,500 French troops." (Country Study, Vietnam, pp. 57, 58.)

II. Second Indochina War (America in Vietnam, 1955 - 1975)

"You know you never defeated us on the battlefield," said the American colonel.

The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark a moment. 'That may be so,' he replied, 'but it is also irrelevant.'"

-- (On Strategy, Harry Summers, p. 21)

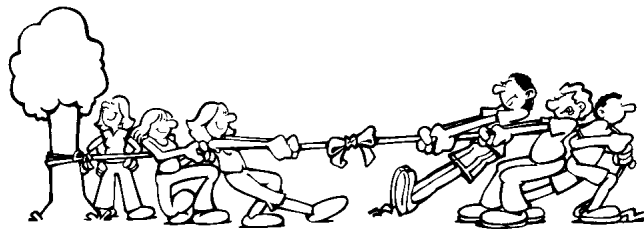
1955 Republic of Vietnam established in South Vietnam with Ngo Dinh Diem (NOH DEEN DYEM) as president.

1956 Last French troops in Vietnam leave. U.S. military advisers train South Vietnamese.



1959 North Vietnam's Central Executive Committee issues Resolution 15, changing its strategy toward South Vietnam from "political struggle" to "armed struggle."

Struggle *"Before discussing the strategy devised by General Giap for use against the Americans, it is necessary to put his thinking into context. His strategy rests on a broad set of military principles devised during the Viet Minh War (and owing much to Chinese thinking), then honed and developed in the Vietnam War. These principles are complex and difficult to deal with in abbreviated form..."*

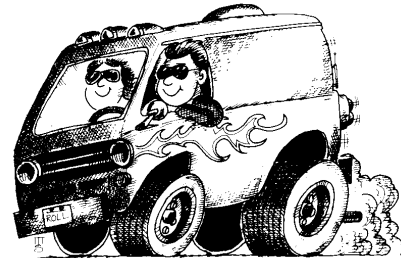


Very briefly, and in oversimplified terms, this basic PAVN [Peoples Army of Vietnam] military doctrine can be described thus: Its essence is dau tranh (dow chang, struggle) of which there are two types: dau tranh vu trang (armed struggle: military action, violence programs) and dau tranh chinh tri (cheeng chee, political struggle: politics with guns).

PAVN cadres in conducting training use the metaphor of the enemy smashed by the hammer of armed struggle on the anvil of political struggle. The point is that dau tranh always is dualistic, the bedrock doctrine being that neither form of struggle can defeat the enemy alone. Only together^{3/4} in the marriage of violence to politics^{3/4} can victory be achieved.

The political dau tranh consists of three van or action programs: dan van (zuhn vhun) or action among the people; dich van (zick vhun) or action among the enemy; binh van (bing vhun) or action among the military.

Collectively these three van programs comprise the entire matrix of political struggle, which, combined with armed struggle, encompasses the entire realm of warfare as the Vietnamese Communists called khoi nghia (koi knee-ah, general uprising), a social myth."



("Conduct of the Vietnam War: Strategic Factors, 1965-1968," by Douglas Pike, in The Evolution of Modern Warfare, C620, [Ft. Leavenworth, KS: CGSOC, Dec 1992], p. 366.)

1961 United States increases role of military advisers in South Vietnam.

1962 United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) created under General Paul Harkins. United States becomes involved in strategic hamlet program. U.S. helicopter units begin airlifting South Vietnamese troops.

Viet Cong "Contraction of the term Viet Nam Cong San (Vietnamese communists), the name applied by the governments of the United States and South Vietnam to the communist insurgents in rebellion against the latter government, beginning around 1957. The Vietnamese communists never used the term themselves, but referred to their movement as the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (also known as the National Liberation Front), formally inaugurated in Dec 1960." (Country Study, Vietnam, p. 368.)



People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) "The military forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (until 1976) and, after reunification, of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. During the Second Indochina War, PAVN bore the brunt of the fighting against the United States military forces in Vietnam, but was consistently able to recoup its losses and infiltrate units by means of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Failing to topple the Saigon government during the Tet Offensive of 1968, PAVN undertook its first conventional invasion of South Vietnam in the Easter Offensive of 1972. This attempt ended in defeat, but PAVN's next effort, the Spring Offensive of 1975, quickly overran the ineffectual ARVN resistance and toppled the Saigon government, thereby bringing to a close the Second Indochina War." (Country Study, Vietnam, p. 367.)

Ho Chi Minh Trail



"An intricate network of jungle trails, paths, and roads leading from the panhandle of northern Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia into the border provinces of southern Vietnam. At the height of the Second Indochina War, it was a major resupply artery for Hanoi's armed forces operating in South Vietnam." (Country Study, Vietnam, pp. 365, 366.)

1963 Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) defeated at Ap Bac. Buddhists stage demonstrations. Diem assassinated.

Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) *"The military ground forces of the South Vietnamese government (Republic of Vietnam) until its collapse in April 1975. ARVN originated in the Vietnamese military units raised by French authorities to defend the Associated State of Vietnam in the early 1950s. During the Second Indochina War, it grew to over 1 million men and women organized into eleven army divisions (plus specialized units, such as Rangers and Special Forces) deployed in four Corps Tactical Zones (redesignated as Military Regions in 1971.)"* (Country Studies, Vietnam, p. 363.)

1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident and resolution. Vietcong attack Bien Hoa air base. 5th Special Forces Group deploys to Vietnam. General Westmoreland becomes MACV commander.

Gulf of Tonkin Resolution *"The Johnson administration remained hesitant to raise the American commitment to Vietnam. However, in August 1964, following the reputed shelling of United States warships in the Gulf of Tonkin off the North Vietnamese coast, [President] Johnson approved air strikes against North Vietnamese naval bases."*



At President Johnson's urgent request, the United States Congress passes the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which gave the president the power 'to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.' (Country Study, Vietnam, pp. 64, 65.)

1965 Vietcong attack U.S. installations. U.S. Air Force begins Rolling Thunder against North Vietnam. U.S. military units deploy to Vietnam in strength. U.S. Army Vietnam (USARV) headquarters created. Protests against U.S. involvement erupt in the United States.



Ia Drang (EE-ah drang) "Less than a month later the newly arrived airmobile division received its own baptism of combat. The North Vietnamese Army attacked a Special Forces camp at Plei Me (play mee); when it was repulsed, Westmoreland directed the division to launch an offensive to locate and destroy enemy regiments that had been identified in the vicinity of the camp. The result was the battle of the Ia Drang valley, named for a small river that flowed through the area of operations. For thirty-five days the division pursued and fought the 32d, 33d, and 66th North Vietnamese Regiments, until the enemy, suffering heavy casualties, returned to his bases in Cambodia..."

Landing zone X-Ray was one of several U.S. positions vulnerable to attack by the enemy forces that occupied the surrounding high ground. Here on 14 November began fighting that pitted three battalions against elements of two NVA regiments.

Withstanding repeated mortar attacks and infantry assaults, the Americans used every means of firepower available to them¾the division's own gunships, massive artillery bombardment, hundreds of strafing and bombing attacks by tactical aircraft, and earth-shaking bombs dropped by B-52 bombers from Guam¾to turn back a determined enemy. The Communists lost 600 dead, the Americans 79.

Although badly hurt, the enemy did not leave the Ia Drang valley. Elements of the 66th North Vietnamese Regiment moving east toward Plei Me encountered an American battalion on 17 November, a few miles north of X-Ray.

The fight that resulted was a gory reminder of the North Vietnamese mastery of the ambush. The Communists quickly snared three U.S. companies in their net. As the trapped units struggled for survival, nearly all semblance of organized combat disappeared in the confusion and mayhem. Neither reinforcements nor effective firepower could be brought in. At times combat was reduced to valiant efforts by individuals and small units to avert annihilation. When the fighting ended that night, 60 percent of the Americans were casualties, and almost one of every three soldiers in the battalion had been killed.

Lauded as the first major American triumph of the Vietnam War, the battle of the Ia Drang Valley was in truth a costly and problematic victory." (The U.S. Army in Vietnam, p. 657.)

1966 United States resumes Rolling Thunder after 37-day halt. Air Force, Army, and Marine units deploy to Vietnam. Army units conduct large-scale operations. B-52 strikes directed against North Vietnam.



1967 Nguyen Van Thieu elected president and Nguyen Cao Ky elected vice president of South Vietnam. Large antiwar protests in the United States.

Dak To (dock tou) "Despite daily air and artillery bombardments of their positions, the North Vietnamese launched two attacks against Dak To on 15 November, destroying two C-130 aircraft and causing severe damage to the camp's surrounding hills, but the North Vietnamese held fast in fortified positions.

The center of enemy resistance was Hill 875; here, two battalions of the 173d Airborne Brigade made a slow and painful ascent against determined resistance and under grueling physical conditions, fighting for every foot of ground. Enemy fire was so intense and accurate that at times the Americans were unable to bring in reinforcements by helicopter or to provide fire support. In fighting that resembled the hill battles of the final stage of the Korean War, the confusion at Dak To pitted soldier against soldier in classic infantry battle. In desperation, beleaguered U.S. commanders on Hill 875 called in artillery and even B-52 air strikes at perilously close range to their own positions. On 17 November American forces at last gained control of Hill 875.



The battle of Dak To was the longest and most violent in the highlands since the battle of the Ia Drang two years before. Enemy casualties numbered in the thousands, with an estimated 1400 killed. Americans had suffered too. Approximately one-fifth of the 173d Airborne Brigade had become casualties, with 174 killed, 642 wounded, and 17 missing in action.

If the battle of the Ia Drang exemplified airmobility in all its versatility, the battle of Dak To, with the arduous ascent of Hill 875, epitomized infantry combat at its most basic and crushing effect of supporting air power." (The U.S. Army in Vietnam, p. 669.)

1968 Siege of Khe Sanh (khay sang). Tet Offensive. U.S. military leaders request 206,000 additional troops for Vietnam and other parts of the world. My Lai massacre. Peace talks begin in Paris. General Abrams replaces Westmoreland as MACV commander. President Johnson announces he will not seek reelection.

My Lai (mee li) "...Except during spasms of intense combat, as in the summer of 1969 when the Americal Division confronted the 1st North Vietnamese Regiment, most U.S. casualties were caused by snipers, mines, and booby traps.

Villages populated by old men, women, and children were as dangerous as the elusive enemy main force units. Operating in such conditions day after day induced a climate of fear and hate among the Americans. The already thin line between civilian and combatant was easily blurred and violated. In the hamlet of My Lai, elements of the Americal Division killed about two hundred civilians in the spring of 1968. Although only one member of the division was tried and found guilty of war crimes, the repercussions of the atrocity were felt throughout the Army. However rare, such acts undid the benefit of countless hours of civic action by Army units and individual soldiers and raised unsettling questions about the conduct of the war.



What happened at My Lai could have occurred in any Army unit in Vietnam in the late 1960's and early 1970's. War crimes were born of a sense of frustration that also contributed to a host of morale and discipline problems, among enlisted men and officers alike. As American forces were withdrawn by a government eager to escape the war, the lack of a clear military objective contributed to a weakened sense of mission and a slackening of discipline.

The short-timer syndrome, the reluctance to take risks in combat toward the end of a soldier's one-year tour, was compounded by the 'last-casualty' syndrome. Knowing that all U.S. troops would soon leave Vietnam, no soldier wanted to be the last to die.

Meanwhile, in the United States harsh criticism of the war, the military, and traditional military values had become widespread. Heightened individualism, growing permissiveness, and a weakening of traditional bonds of authority pervaded American society and affected the Army's rank and file. The Army grappled with problems of drug abuse, racial tensions, weakened discipline, and lapses of leadership.

While outright refusals to fight were few in number, incidents of 'fragging'—murderous attacks on officers and noncoms—occurred frequently enough to compel commands to institute a host of new security measures within their cantonments. All these problems were symptoms of larger social and political forces and underlined a growing disenchantment with the war among soldiers in the field." (The U.S. Army in Vietnam, p. 681.)



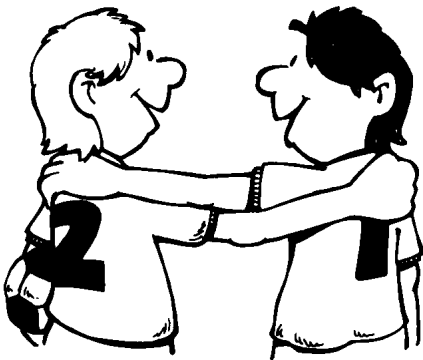
1969 President Nixon sworn in. Secret bombing of Cambodia. "Vietnamization" program announced. United States begins withdrawing from Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh dies. My Lai massacre revealed.

Hamburger Hill

"On 11 May 1969, a battalion of the 101st Airborne Division climbing Hill 937 found the 29th North Vietnamese Regiment waiting for it. The struggle for "Hamburger Hill" raged for ten days and became one of the war's fiercest and most controversial battles. Entrenched in tiers of fortified bunkers with well-prepared fields of fire, the enemy forces withstood repeated attempts to dislodge them. Supported by intense artillery and air strikes, Americans made a slow, tortuous climb, fighting hand to hand. By the time Hill 937 was taken, three Army battalions and an ARVN regiment had been committed to the battle.

Victory, however, was ambiguous as well as costly; the hill itself had no strategic or tactical importance and was abandoned soon after its capture. Critics charged that the battle wasted American lives and exemplified the irrelevance of U.S. tactics in Vietnam. Defending the operation, the commander of the 101st acknowledged that the hill's only significance was that the enemy occupied it. 'My mission,' he said, 'was to destroy enemy forces and installations. We found the enemy on Hill 937, and that is where we fought them.' (The U.S. Army in Vietnam, p. 680.)

Vietnamization



"The last phase of American involvement in South Vietnam was carried out under a broad policy called Vietnamization. Its main goal was to create strong, largely self-reliant South Vietnamese forces, an objective consistent with that espoused by U.S. advisers as early as the 1950's. But Vietnamization also meant the withdrawal of a half-million American soldiers.

Past efforts to strengthen and modernize South Vietnam's Army had proceeded at a measured pace, without the pressure of diminishing American support, large-scale combat, or the presence of formidable North Vietnamese forces in the South.

Vietnamization entailed three overlapping phases: redeployment of American forces and the assumption of their combat role by the South Vietnamese; improvement of ARVN's combat and support capabilities, especially firepower and mobility; and replacement of the Military Assistance Command by an American advisory group.

Vietnamization had the added dimension of fostering political, social, and economic reforms to create a vibrant South Vietnamese state based on popular participation in national political life. Such reforms, however, depended on progress in the pacification program which never had a clearly fixed timetable.

The task of carrying out the military aspects of Vietnamization fell to General Creighton W. Abrams, who succeeded General Westmoreland as MACV commander in mid-1968..." (The U.S. Army in Vietnam, p. 675.)

1970 Kissinger begins secret peace talks in Paris. Prince Norodom Sihanouk (nor-ah-DOM SEE-ah-NOOK) of Cambodia overthrown by General Lon Nol. U.S. operations in Cambodia. U.S. raid on Son Tay prison camp in North Vietnam. Congress prohibits U.S. combat forces in Cambodia or Laos. U.S. troop withdrawals continue.



National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger's Perspective "I cannot yet write about Vietnam except with pain and sadness..." writes then National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger.

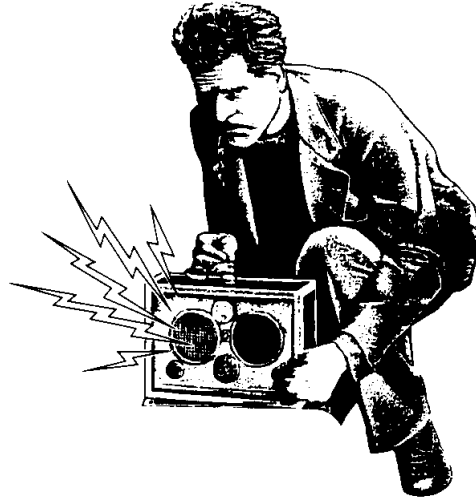


Dr. Kissinger saw American involvement in Vietnam as the result of an optimistic idealism inherent within the American view of the world. Cynical, criminal conspiracy, "ugly American" theories played little role. (See The White House Years, by Henry Kissinger, pp. 226, 230.)

1971 ARVN conduct operations in Laos. U.S. troop withdrawals continue. Pentagon Papers published.

Pentagon Papers "Publication of classified Pentagon papers on the U.S. involvement in Vietnam was begun June 13 by the New York Times. In a 6-3 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court June 30 upheld the right of the Times and the Washington Post to publish the documents under the protection of the first amendment." (The World Almanac, 1996, p. 506.)

1972 North Vietnamese launch Eastertide offensive. United States resumes bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong after four-year lull. Paris peace talks deadlock. Operation Linebacker II (Christmas bombing).



1973 Peace pact signed in Paris by the United States, South Vietnam, Vietcong, and North Vietnamese. Congress passes War Powers Act. Withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Vietnam and release of American POWs.

Missing-in-action (MIA)

"United States military term for servicemen who remained unaccounted for at the end of the Second Indochina War. In the 1980s, rumors persisted that some MIAs were still alive and had been detained involuntarily in Vietnam after the war." (Country Study, Vietnam, p. 366.)

1974 President Nixon resigns. Congress reduces aid to South Vietnam. North Vietnam attacks South Vietnamese across border.

1975 North Vietnamese continue major attacks. Saigon falls.

Boat People *"Refugees who fled Vietnam by sea after 1975. Many fell victim to pirate attacks in the Gulf of Thailand, drowned, or endured starvation and dehydration as a result of their escape in ill-equipped and undersized vessels. Those who reached safety in neighboring Southeast Asian countries were accorded temporary asylum in refugee camps while awaiting permanent resettlement in industrialized Western nations willing to accept them." (Country Study, Vietnam, p. 363.)*

Khmer Rouge (kmer roozh) *"The name given to the Cambodian communists by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in the 1960s...Between 1975 and 1978, it denoted the Democratic Kampuchean (or Khmer) Communist Party. After being driven from Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in Dec 1978, the Khmer Rouge went back to guerrilla warfare and joined forces with two noncommunist insurgent movements to form the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea."* (Country Study, Vietnam, p. 366.)

III. Lessons of Vietnam--Selected Insights of Importance to Military Linguists

1. Importance of Culture on Operations

a. Culture/social impact

"...The rediscovery of the Vietnam War suggests that its most important legacy may be the lesson that unique historical, political, cultural, and social factors always impinge on the military."



Strategic and tactical success rests not only on military progress but on correctly analyzing the nature of the particular conflict, understanding the enemy's strategy, and realistically assessing the strengths and weaknesses of allies. A new humility and a new sophistication may form the best parts of the complex heritage left the Army by the long, bitter war in Vietnam." (The U.S. Army in Vietnam, p. 693.)

b. Negotiation styles

Dr. Kissinger describes the negotiation styles of the North Vietnamese as being "superbly skillful," not like representatives from an underdeveloped country. Their style was an indirect one, aiming to overcome by exhaustion rather than clear clarification of issues. (See The White House Years, pp. 1030, 1032, 1368.)

2. Attitudes Toward Populace

General Abrams, Commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam, saw the importance of cultural awareness. He *"was one of the few commanders out there who had studied the Vietnamese character enough to respect the Vietnamese."* (Thunderbolt, p. 266.)

His sense of respect applied not only to the South Vietnamese, but to enemy forces as well.



3. Holiday and Observance Importance

The timing of some combined operations (American--South Vietnamese) such as the attacks of Fishhook and Parrot's Beak required input from counterparts of both Armies. The first suggested dates were impossible to Vietnamese forces. A senior Vietnamese General said...

"He had been to see his astrologer, and that was the worst day that could have been picked. He wanted to go... when the signs were more favorable." (Thunderbolt, p. 286)

4. Perspectives Toward the Enemy

Then Captain James McDonough, a platoon leader in Vietnam, led battle hardened soldiers in jungle conditions. After one lieutenant addressed North Vietnamese prisoners as "gooks," CPT McDonough countered...

'They aren't gooks,' I said quietly. 'They're soldiers, just like you and me.' (Platoon Leader, p. 160.)



5. Overall Lessons

"The most important point to make about the U.S. in this respect probably is that we first committed ourselves to the war and then began to think about it comprehensively.



The highest level leadership did not initially sit down and address in detailed and extended fashion its strategic position, did not discuss and analyze enemy strengths, weaknesses, and probable strategies, did not wrangle and argue and finally hammer out a fully articulated strategy.

There was in this behavior a sense of enormous self-confidence, indeed a kind of unconscious arrogance on the part of the Americans. It was abundantly evident in Vietnam during the early period of the arriving American ground troops—particularly those American civilians who had been present in Vietnam in earlier years.

It was manifested mainly toward ARVN, a syndrome of superior professionalism: step aside and let the big boys do it.

The second most important point to make in this respect is that we entered the war without fully appreciating the enemy's strategy. Worse, we never made a serious effort to correct this shortcoming. The highest leadership never devoted itself to systematically learning about Hanoi's strategic thinking and doctrine. Indeed there is not even today clear knowledge in the U.S. government as to what exactly was the strategy employed by the Communist military forces in Vietnam...

No one, in or out of government, ever produced a history of PAVN, a PAVN guide, or any other full-scale study of PAVN and PLAF.



No significant biographical studies of enemy leaders were done. We had 470,000 Americans in Vietnam at the height of the war, and one sociologist in the villages doing research on social organization. The number of analysts working on the Viet Cong (National Liberation Front, NLF) could be numbered on the fingers of one hand, and they started years after the organization was formed.

One can search the voluminous Pentagon Papers in vain for extended discussion of the other side, any discussion at all. Unlike earlier wars in which research and analysis were both extensive and esoteric...in Vietnam we allocated hardly any resources. Much tactical intelligence was generated that could have been exploited, but wasn't.

Work on order of battle generally was good; politics of the Politburo was hardly touched."

(*"Conduct of the Vietnam War: Strategic Factors, 1965-1968,"* by Douglas Pike, The Evolution of Modern Warfare, C620, pp. 370, 371.)



"Confront your fears."

Vocabulary List: Vietnam

Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) The military ground forces of the South Vietnamese government (Republic of Vietnam) until its collapse in April 1975. ARVN originated in the Vietnamese military units raised by French authorities to defend the Associated State of Vietnam in the early 1950s. During the Second Indochina War, it grew to over 1 million men and women organized into 11 army divisions.

Bao Dai (bow di, 1913-1997) Born Nguyen Vinh Thuy, ruled Vietnam as the last emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty from 1926-45. In a final attempt to control the Viet Minh (Ho Chi Minh's political party), Bao Dai allowed the French to reclaim hold on Vietnam by naming the country as a French protectorate.

Boat people Refugees who fled Vietnam by sea after 1975. Many fell victim to pirate attacks in the Gulf of Thailand, drowned, or endured starvation and dehydration as a result of their escape in ill-equipped and undersized vessels.

Cao Dai (kow-DI) A self-styled, Vietnamese reformed Buddhist sect, founded and initially propagated by Ngo Van Chieu, a minor official who, in 1919, claimed to have had a series of revelations. An amalgam of different beliefs derived from Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, and Western nineteenth-century romanticism, it claimed 1 million to 2 million adherents.

Dak To (dock tou) Site of especially hard fighting in 1967. If the battle of the Ia Drang exemplified airmobility in all its versatility, the battle of Dak To, with the arduous ascent of Hill 875, epitomized infantry combat at its most basic and crushing effect of supporting air power.

Dien Bien Phu French garrison, thought impregnable by the French, which fell after a siege, in 1954. This victory demonstrated the tenacity of the Viet Minh forces.

Doan Ngu (dwan new) Vietnamese celebration marking the Summer Solstice. Offerings made to spirits, ghosts and God of Death to protect against epidemics. Burnings of human figures provide souls to staff the army of the God of Death.

Giap, Vo Nguyen (ZAP vo new-win, 1911-) Organized the Viet Minh as commander in chief. Master of guerrilla warfare who fought the Japanese during WW II, ended French colonization in Vietnam, and defeated United States forces to unify his nation at the end of the Vietnam War in 1976. Giap served as deputy prime minister and minister of defense until his retirement in 1982.

Gulf of Tonkin Resolution Declaration by congress giving the president power to deter aggression when hostile actions were committed against U.S. forces. Established after purported North Vietnamese attacks on U.S. Navy personnel in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Hamburger Hill On 11 May 1969, a battalion of the 101st Airborne Division climbing Hill 937 found the 29th North Vietnamese Regiment waiting for it. The struggle for "Hamburger Hill" raged for 10 days and became one of the war's fiercest and most controversial battles.

Ho Chi Minh (HOH CHEE MIHN, 1969) "Father of his country," founding the Communist Party in Vietnam after co-founding the same in France twenty years prior.

Ho Chi Minh Trail An intricate network of jungle trails, paths, and roads leading from the panhandle of northern Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia into the border provinces of southern Vietnam. At the height of the Second Indochina War, it was a major resupply artery for Hanoi's armed forces operating in South Vietnam.

Hoa (WHA) Han Chinese, the single largest ethnic group in Vietnam.

Hoa Hao [WHA HOW], A reformed Vietnamese Theravada Buddhist sect which preserved a distinctive Buddhist coloration. Based mostly in the southernmost areas of the delta, it stressed individual prayer, simplicity, and social justice over icon veneration or elaborate ceremonies.

Hungry Ghost Festival Remembrance of souls of dead through grave visitation. Known as Yue Lan, Vu Lan Day, Day of the Dead, Trung Nguyen (chung new-when). Second most important festival after Tet.

Ia Drang (EE-ah drang) Site of the first major U.S. forces airmobile operation in South Vietnam. Took place in 1965 in the Ia Drang Valley.

Khmer Rouge (kmer roozh) The name given to the Cambodian communists by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in the 1960s...Between 1975 and 1978, it denoted the Democratic Kampuchean (or Khmer) Communist Party. After being driven from Phnom Penh by the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in Dec 1978, the Khmer Rouge went back to guerrilla warfare and joined forces with two noncommunist insurgent movements to form the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea.

Missing-in-action (MIA) United States military term for servicemen who remained unaccounted for at the end of the Second Indochina War. In the 1980s, rumors persisted that some MIAs were still alive and had been detained involuntarily in Vietnam after the war.

Montagnards (mon-tahn-YAHRD) Minorities that live in the mountainous regions of Vietnam. The Vietnamese also disparagingly call them "moi," meaning savage.

My Lai (mee li) In the hamlet of My Lai, elements of the Americal Division killed about two hundred civilians in the spring of 1968. Although only one member of the division was tried and found guilty of war crimes, the repercussions of the atrocity were felt throughout the army.

Ngo Dinh Diem (NOH DEEN DYEM, 1901-1963) In 1954, Diem staged an election which forced Emperor Bao Dai to abdicate with himself becoming first president of South Vietnam. Anticommunist, anti-French, and against unification with North Vietnam. Formed a loose alliance with the United States to contain the Communist north. Severely abused power by placing family members in high ranking positions, and actively promoting Catholicism.

Pentagon Papers Publication of classified Pentagon papers on the U.S. involvement in Vietnam was begun June 13 by the New York Times. In a 6-3 vote, the U.S. Supreme Court June 30 upheld the right of the Times and the Washington Post to publish the documents under the protection of the first amendment.

People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) The military forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (until 1976) and, after reunification, of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. During the Second Indochina War, PAVN bore the brunt of the fighting against the United States military forces in Vietnam, but was consistently able to recoup its losses and infiltrate units by means of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Struggle Dual sided tactic employed by General Giap of the North Vietnamese forces. Struggle involved both political (politics with guns) and military (violence and action) means.

Tet Vietnamese New Year, an abbreviation for Tet Nguyen Dan, "first day." Start of new year with family reunions, respect given departed ancestors, payment of debts.

Thanh-Minh (tang ming) Similar to U.S. Memorial Day, Thanh-Minh day honors the dead. Flowers, food, incense and other offerings brought by family members to the graves of departed relatives.

Viet Cong Contraction of the term Viet Nam Cong San (Vietnamese Communists), the name applied by the governments of the United States and South Vietnam to the Communist insurgents in rebellion against the latter government, beginning around 1957.

Viet Minh (VEE-et MIHN) Common name given to the Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnamese Independence League) founded by the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) in 1941 under Ho Chi Minh. The Viet Minh was determined to free Vietnam of all foreigners and later reunite the split nation.

Vietnamization Process of handing over the defense of South Vietnam to the Vietnamese themselves. It entailed three overlapping phases: redeployment of American forces and the assumption of their combat role by the South Vietnamese; improvement of ARVN's combat and support capabilities, especially firepower and mobility; and replacement of the Military Assistance Command by an American advisory group.

Review Quiz: Vietnam



Part 1--Multiple Choice Place the letter of the most correct response in the blank provided.

1. _____ Most ethnic Vietnamese identify themselves with
 - a. Theravada Buddhism.
 - b. Mahayana Buddhism.
 - c. Zen.
2. _____ Current Vietnamese government policy toward religious practice encourages tolerance as long as adherents
 - a. only practice their faith in their homes.
 - b. stick close to official guidelines and registration practices.
 - c. identify freely with world-side religious groups.
3. _____ Where are Protestants most likely to be found in Vietnam?
 - a. In the delta region near Ho Chi Minh City
 - b. In the southern highlands among the Montagnard peoples
 - c. There are no Protestants in Vietnam
4. _____ Ethnic Vietnamese live primarily in the delta regions and
 - a. coastal plains.
 - b. central highlands and mountains.
 - c. jungle forests.
5. _____ The Hoa (Wha), the largest minority people of Vietnam, are of what background?
 - a. Han Chinese
 - b. Khmer Cambodian
 - c. Thai

6. _____ The current Vietnamese government works with non-government agencies (NGOs) to combat
- a. religious proselytism.
 - b. prostitution.
 - c. child labor laws.
7. _____ A complex dispute between Vietnam, China, Malaysia, Philippines and Taiwan concerns the oil rich region of the
- a. Spratley Islands.
 - b. Brunei Straits.
 - c. Mekong Delta.
8. _____ The second most important Vietnamese festival after Tet is
- a. Doan Ngu (summer solstice).
 - b. Hungry Ghost Festival.
 - c. Thanh-Minh (honor given dead).
9. _____ According to Culturgrams, some analysts see current Vietnamese as looking forward to
- a. punishing Americans for land mines laid during the Vietnam conflict.
 - b. doing business with Americans and setting aside feelings raised by the Vietnam conflict.
 - c. seek reparations from the American government for the Vietnam conflict.
10. _____ In current Vietnam, reverence for _____ is mandatory by law.
- a. Gautama Buddha
 - b. Ho Chi Minh
 - c. Vo Nguyen Giap
11. _____ Current economic policy in Vietnam is
- a. rigid Marxian Communist.
 - b. tolerant of some free market activity.
 - c. so bureaucratic little development occurs.

Unit 12f: Country Studies--Vietnam

12. _____ Which north Vietnamese leader was a master of tactical and strategic warfare, influential in his country's eventual victory?

- a. Vo Nguyen Giap
- b. Ho Chi Minh
- c. Ngo Dinh Diem

13. _____ What Communist group defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu?

- a. PAVN
- b. Viet Minh
- c. Viet Cong

14. _____ A primary strategy of General Giap was the doctrine of political and military _____.

- a. surprise
- b. struggle
- c. victory

15. _____ The Ho Chi Minh trail usually operated just _____ the Cambodian border.

- a. alongside
- b. inside
- c. outside

16. _____ The _____ gave the President power to repel armed attack against the U.S. and prevent further aggression.

- a. War Powers Act of 1942
- b. Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
- c. Tet offensive

17. _____ The first major American airmobile offensive, taking place in 1965, occurred

- a. in the Ia Drang Valley.
- b. at Hill 875.
- c. near Khe Sanh.

18. _____ The former National Security Advisor, instrumental in bringing an end to U.S. involvement in Vietnam, was

- a. Casper Weinberger.
- b. Henry Kissenger.
- c. Robert McNamara.

19. _____ Classified documents pertaining to the Vietnam War, published in 1971 by the New York Times and Washington Post, were called

- a. the Khmer Rouge.
- b. the Pentagon Papers.
- c. Indo-China Journal.

20. _____ The French fortified camp at _____, seemingly impenetrable, fell to Viet Minh soldiers in 1954.

- a. Dien Bien Phu
- b. Khe Sanh
- c. Dak To

Part 2--True or False Place a T or F in the blank provided.



- 1. _____ The Catholic faith and practice is most prominent in the former northern area of Vietnam.
- 2. _____ Cao Dai practice draws primarily upon Buddhist thought and understanding.
- 3. _____ Folk religion continues to display an impact on Vietnamese personal and social behavior.
- 4. _____ Astrology has little place in folk belief and practice of the Vietnamese people.
- 5. _____ Non-Chinese minorities in Vietnam currently live relatively independent lives in the highlands.

6. _____ Current Vietnamese government practice rigorously enforces constitutional provision of equal pay for women.
7. _____ When in Vietnam, expect Vietnamese people to pass items primarily with their right hand.
8. _____ Current Vietnamese government policy allows Buddhist and Catholic clergy great freedom in their organization and connections with world-wide groups.
9. _____ Vietnamese Muslims desiring to go on Hajj can do so with little government interference.
10. _____ Astrological prediction affected the timing of at least one South Vietnamese attack during the Vietnam conflict.



Part 3--Matching

Place the correct letter in the blank provided.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. _____ Giap, Vo Nguyen | A. Communist warriors founded by Ho Chi Minh, dedicated to free Vietnam of foreigners and reunite the nation. |
| 2. _____ Ngo Dinh Diem | |
| 3. _____ Ho Chi Minh | B. Military forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (N. Vietnam), who bore the brunt of fighting against U.S. forces. |
| 4. _____ Viet Minh | |
| 5. _____ Dien Bien Phu | C. Program designed to create self-reliant S. Vietnamese forces, allowing for withdrawal of U.S. personnel. |
| 6. _____ Viet Cong | |
| 7. _____ PAVN | D. "Father of his country." |
| 8. _____ ARVN | |
| 9. _____ My Lai | E. Military forces of the South Vietnamese government. |
| 10. _____ Vietnamization | |

- F. Commander in Chief of Viet Minh, a brilliant tactical and strategic leader during the Vietnam conflict.
- G. Village where 200 civilians were killed, repercussions which were felt throughout the U.S. forces.
- H. French garrison of 15,000 which suffered a Viet Minh siege and surrendered 7 May 1954.
- I. Anticommunist, often corrupt South Vietnamese leader eventually assassinated in a 1963 coup.
- J. Term given around 1957, by U.S. and South Vietnamese, to insurgents against South Vietnam.



"I will support and defend....' Accordingly, we will have: courage to meet the demands of our profession and the mission when it is hazardous, demanding, or otherwise difficult; Make decisions in the best interest of the navy and the nation, without regard to personal consequences; Meet these challenges while adhering to a higher standard of personal conduct and decency; Be loyal to our nation, ensuring the resources entrusted to us are used in an honest, careful, and efficient way. Courage is the value that gives us the moral and mental strength to do what is right, even in the face of personal or professional adversity."

A Core Value of the United States Navy

